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# ESSAYS

Seventh Edition

# ESSAYS

## WRITTEN IN THE INTERVALS

## OF BUSINESS.

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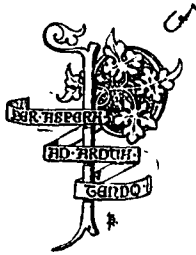


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# ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Publishers beg to announce that, on account of the numerous applications which have been made for copies of the *Essays written in the Intervals of Business,* which have been for some time out of print, the Author has consented to the publication of another edition.

October, 1858.

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# THE FIRST PART.

'And he that knows how little certainty there is in humane discourses, and how *we know in part, and prophesie in part*, and that of every thing whereof we know a little, we are ignorant in much more, must either be content with such proportion as the things will bear, or as himself can get, or else he must never seek to alter or to perswade any man to be of his opinion. For the greatest part of discourses that are in the whole world, is nothing but a heap of probable inducements, plausibilities, and witty entertainments: and the throng of notices is not unlike the accidents of a battel, in which every man tells a new tale, something that he saw, mingled with a great many things which he saw not; his eyes and his fear joyning together equally in the instructions and the illusion, these make up the stories.'

Jeremy Taylor's *Ductor Dubitantium*.

## ON PRACTICAL WISDOM.

PRACTICAL wisdom acts in the mind, as gravitation does in the material world: combining, keeping things in their places, and maintaining a mutual dependence amongst the various parts of our system. It is for ever reminding us where we are, and what we can do, not in fancy, but in real life. It does not permit us to wait for dainty duties, pleasant to the imagination; but insists upon our doing those which are before us. It is always inclined to make much of what it possesses: and is not given to ponder over those schemes which might have been carried on, if what is irrevocable had been other than it is. It does not suffer us to waste our energies in regret. In journeying with it we go towards the sun, and the shadow of our burden falls behind us.

In bringing anything to completion the means which it looks for are not the shortest, nor the neatest, nor the best that can be ima-

gined. They have however this advantage, that they happen to be within reach.

We are liable to make constant mistakes about the nature of practical wisdom, until we come to perceive that it consists not in any one predominant faculty or disposition, but rather in a certain harmony amongst all the faculties and affections of the man. Where this harmony exists, there are likely to be well-chosen ends, and means judiciously adapted. But, as it is, we see numerous instances of men who, with great abilities, accomplish nothing, and we are apt to vary our views of practical wisdom according to the particular failings of these men. Sometimes we think it consists in having a definite purpose, and being constant to it. But take the case of a deeply selfish person: he will be constant enough to his purpose, and it will be a definite one. Very likely, too, it may not be founded upon unreasonable expectations. The object which he has in view may be a small thing; but being as close to his eyes as to his heart, there will be times when he can see nothing above it, or beyond it, or beside it. And so he may fail in practical wisdom.

Sometimes it is supposed that practical wisdom is not likely to be found amongst imaginative persons. And this is very true, if you mean by 'imaginative persons' those who have an excess of imagination. For in the mind as in the body, general dwarfishness is often accompanied by a disproportionate size of some part. The large hands and feet of a dwarf seem to have devoured his stature. But if you mean that imagination, of itself, is something inconsistent with practical wisdom, I think you will find that your opinion is not founded on experience. On the contrary, I believe that there have been few men who have done great things in the world who have not had a large power of imagination. For imagination, if it be subject to reason, is its 'slave of the lamp.'

It is a common error to suppose that practical wisdom is something Epicurean in its nature, which makes no difficulties, takes things as they come, is desirous of getting rid rather than of completing, and which, in short, is never troublesome. And from a fancy of this kind, many persons are considered speculative merely because they are of a searching nature; and are not satisfied with small expedients, and such devices as serve to conceal

the ills they cannot cure. And if to be practical is to do things in such a way as to leave a great deal for other people to undo at some future, and no very distant, period—then, certainly, these scrutinizing pains-taking sort of persons are not practical. For it is their nature to prefer a good open visible rent to a time-serving patch. I do not mean to say that they may not resort to patching as a means of delay. But they will not permit themselves to fancy that they have done a thing when they have only hit upon some expedient for putting off the doing.

Bacon says, 'In this theatre of man's life, God and angels only should be lookers-on; that contemplation and action ought ever to be united, a conjunction like unto that of the two highest planets, Saturn the planet of rest, and Jupiter the planet of action.' It is in this conjunction, which seems to Bacon so desirable, that practical wisdom delights; and on that account it is supposed by some men to have a tinge of baseness in it. They do not know that practical wisdom is as far from what they term expediency, as it is from impracticability itself. They see how much of compromise there is in all human affairs.

At the same time, they do not perceive that this compromise, which should be the nice limit between wilfulness and a desertion of the light that is within us, is the thing of all others which requires the diligent exercise of that uprightness which they fear to put in peril, and which, they persuade themselves, will be strengthened by inactivity. They fancy, too, that high moral resolves and great principles are not for daily use, and that there is no room for them in the affairs of this life. This is an extreme delusion. For how is the world ever made better? not by mean little schemes which some men fondly call practical, not by setting one evil thing to counteract another, but by the introduction of those principles of action which are looked upon at first as theories, but which are at last acknowledged and acted upon as common truths. The men who first introduce these principles are practical men, though the practices which such principles create may not come into being in the life-time of their founders.

## AIDS TO CONTENTMENT.

THE first object of this Essay is to suggest some antidotes against the manifold ingenuity of self-tormenting.

For instance, how much fretting might be prevented by a thorough conviction that there can be no such thing as unmixed good in this world! In ignorance of this, how many a man, after having made a free choice in any matter, contrives to find innumerable causes for blaming his judgment! Blue and green having been the only colours put before him, he is dissatisfied with himself because he omitted to choose pure white. Shenstone has worked out the whole process with fidelity. 'We are oftentimes in suspense betwixt the choice of different pursuits. We choose one at last doubtingly, and with an unconquered hankering after the other. We find the scheme, which we have chosen, answer our expectations but indifferently—most worldly projects will. We, therefore, repent of our choice, and immediately fancy happiness in the paths which we decline;

and this heightens our uneasiness. We might at least escape the aggravation of it. It is not improbable, we had been more unhappy, but extremely probable, we had not been less so, had we made a different decision.'

A great deal of discomfort arises from over-sensitiveness about what people may say of you, or your actions. This requires to be blunted. Consider whether anything that you can do will have much connexion with what they will say. And besides, it may be doubted whether they will say anything at all about you. Many unhappy persons seem to imagine that they are always in an amphitheatre, with the assembled world as spectators; whereas, all the while, they are playing to empty benches. They fancy, too, that they form the particular theme of every passer-by. If, however, they must listen to imaginary conversations about themselves, they might, at any rate, defy the proverb, and insist upon hearing themselves well spoken of.

Well, but suppose that it is no fancy: and that you really are the object of unmerited obloquy. What then? It has been well

said, that in that case the abuse does not touch you; that if you are guiltless, it ought not to hurt your feelings any more than if it were said of another person, with whom you are not even acquainted. You may answer that this false description of you is often believed in by those whose good opinion is of importance to your welfare. That certainly is a palpable injury; and the best mode of bearing up against it is to endeavour to form some just estimate of its nature and extent. Measure it by the worldly harm which is done to you. Do not let your imagination conjure up all manner of apparitions of scorn, and contempt, and universal hissing. It is partly your own fault if the calumny is believed in by those who ought to know you, and in whose affections you live. That should be a circle within which no poisoned dart can reach you. And for the rest, for the injury done you in the world's estimation, it is simply a piece of ill-fortune, about which it is neither wise nor decorous to make much moaning.

A little thought will sometimes prevent you from being discontented at not meeting with the gratitude which you have expected. If you were only to measure your expecta-

tions of gratitude by the extent of benevolence which you have expended, you would seldom have occasion to call people ungrateful. But many persons are in the habit of giving such a factitious value to any services which they may render, that there is but little chance of their being contented with what they are likely to get in return, which, however, may be quite as much as they deserve.

Besides, it is a common thing for people to expect from gratitude what affection alone can give.

There are many topics which may console you when you are displeased at not being as much esteemed as you think you ought to be. You may begin by observing that people in general will not look about for anybody's merits, or admire anything which does not come in their way. You may consider how satirical would be any praise which should not be based upon a just appreciation of your merits: you may reflect how few of your fellow-creatures can have the opportunity of forming a just judgment about you: you may then go further, and think how few of those few are persons whose judgment would influence you deeply in other

matters: and you may conclude by imagining that such persons do estimate you fairly; though perhaps you never hear it.

The heart of man seeks for sympathy, and each of us craves a recognition of his talents and his labours. But this craving is in danger of becoming morbid, unless it be constantly kept in check by calm reflection on its vanity, or by dwelling upon the very different and far higher motives which should actuate us. That man has fallen into a pitiable state of moral sickness, in whose eyes the good opinion of his fellow-men is the test of merit, and their applause the principal reward for exertion.

A habit of mistrust is the torment of some people. It taints their love and their friendship. They take up small causes of offence. They expect their friends to show the same aspect to them at all times; which is more than human nature can do. They try experiments to ascertain whether they are sufficiently loved: they watch narrowly the effects of absence, and require their friends to prove to them that the intimacy is exactly upon the same footing as it was before. Some persons acquire these suspicious ways from a

natural diffidence in themselves; for which they are often loved the more: and they might find ample comfort in that, if they could but believe it. With others, these habits arise from a selfishness which cannot be satisfied. And their endeavours should be to uproot such a disposition, not to soothe it.

Contentment abides with truth. And you will generally suffer for wishing to appear other than what you are; whether it be richer, or greater, or more learned. The mask soon becomes an instrument of torture.

Fit objects to employ the intervals of life are among the greatest aids to contentment that a man can possess. The lives of many persons are an alternation of the one engrossing pursuit, and a sort of listless apathy. They are either grinding, or doing nothing. Now to those who are half their lives fiercely busy, the remaining half is often torpid without quiescence. A man should have some pursuits which may be always in his power, and to which he may turn gladly in his hours of recreation.

And if the intellect requires thus to be provided with perpetual objects, what must

it be with the affections? Depend upon it, the most fatal idleness is that of the heart. And the man who feels weary of life may be sure that he does not love his fellow-creatures as he ought.

You cannot hope for anything like contentment so long as you continue to attach that ridiculous degree of importance to the events of this life which so many people are inclined to do. Observe the effect which it has upon them: they are most uncomfortable if their little projects do not turn out according to their fancy—nothing is to be angular to them—they regard external things as the only realities; and as they have fixed their abode here, they must have it arranged to their mind. In all they undertake, they feel the anxiety of a gambler, and not the calmness of a labouring man. It is, however, the success or failure of their efforts, and not the motives for their endeavour, which gives them this concern. 'It will be all the same a hundred years hence.' So says the Epicurean as he saunters by. The Christian exhorts them to extend their hopes and their fears to the far future. But they are up to their lips in the present, though they taste it none

the more for that. And so they go on, fretting, and planning, and contending; until an event, about which of all their anxieties they have felt the least anxious, sweeps them and their cobwebs away from the face of the earth.

I have no intention of putting forward specifics for real afflictions, or pretending to teach refined methods for avoiding grief. As long, however, as there is anything to be done in a matter, the time for grieving about it has not come. But when the subject for grief is fixed and inevitable, sorrow is to be borne like pain. It is only a paroxysm of either that can justify us in neglecting the duties which no bereavement can lessen, and which no sorrow can leave us without. And we may remember that sorrow is at once, the lot, the trial, and the privilege, of man.

Most of the aids to contentment above suggested, are comparatively, superficial ones; and, though they may be serviceable, there is much in human nature that they cannot touch. Even Pagans were wont to look for more potent remedies. They could not help

seeking for some great idea to rest upon; something to still the throbbings of their souls; some primæval mystery which should be answerable for the miseries of life. Such was their idea of Necessity, the source of such systems as the Stoic and the Epicurean. Christianity rests upon very different foundations. And surely a Christian's reliance on divine goodness, and his full belief in another world, should console him under serious affliction, and bear the severer test of supporting him against that under-current of vexations which is not wanting in the smoothest life.

## ON SELF-DISCIPLINE.

THERE is always some danger of self-discipline leading to a state of self-confidence: and the more so, when the motives for it are of a poor and worldly character, or the results of it outward only, and superficial. But surely when a man has got the better of any bad habit or evil disposition, his sensations should not be those of exultation only: ought they not rather to be akin to the shuddering faintness with which he would survey a chasm that he had been guided to avoid, or with which he would recal to mind a dubious deadly struggle which had terminated in his favour? The sense of danger is never, perhaps, so fully apprehended as when the danger has been overcome.

Self-discipline is grounded on self-knowledge. A man may be led to resolve upon some general course of self-discipline by a faint glimpse of his moral degradation: let him not be contented with that small insight. His first step in self-discipline should be to attempt to have something like an adequate

idea of the extent of the disorder. The deeper he goes in this matter the better: he must try to probe his own nature thoroughly. Men often make use of what self-knowledge they may possess to frame for themselves skilful flattery, or to amuse themselves in fancying what such persons as they are would do under various imaginary circumstances. For flatteries and for fancies of this kind, not much depth of self-knowledge is required: but he who wants to understand his own nature for the purposes of self-discipline, must strive to learn the whole truth about himself, and not shrink from telling it to his own soul:—

> 'To thine own self be true,
> And it must follow, as the night the day,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man.'

The old courtier Polonius meant this for worldly wisdom: but it may be construed much more deeply.

Imagine the soul, then, thoroughly awake to its state of danger, and the whole energies of the man devoted to self-improvement. At this point, there often arises a habit of introspection which is too limited in its nature: we scrutinize each action as if it were a thing

by itself, independent and self-originating; and so our scrutiny does less good, perhaps, than might be expected from the pain it gives and the resolution it requires. Any truthful examination into our actions must be good; but we ought not to be satisfied with it, until it becomes both searching and progressive. Its aim should be not only to investigate instances, but to discover principles. Thus, —suppose that our conscience upbraids us for any particular bad habit: we then regard each instance of it with intense self-reproach, and long for an opportunity of proving the amendment which seems certain to arise from our pangs of regret. The trial comes: and sometimes our former remorse is remembered, and saves us; and sometimes it is forgotten, and our conduct is as bad as it was before our conscience was awakened. Now in such a case we should begin at the beginning, and strive to discover where it is that we are wrong in the heart. This is not to be done by weighing each particular instance, and observing after what interval it occurred, and whether with a little more, or a little less, temptation than usual: instead of dwelling chiefly on mere circumstances of this kind, we should try and get at the

substance of the thing, so as to ascertain what fundamental precept of God is violated by the habit in question. That precept we should make our study; and then there is more hope of a permanent amendment.

Infinite toil would not enable you to sweep away a mist; but, by ascending a little, you may often look over it altogether. So it is with our moral improvement: we wrestle fiercely with a vicious habit, which would have no hold upon us if we ascended into a higher moral atmosphere.

As I have heard suggested, it is by adding to our good purposes, and nourishing the affections which are rightly placed, that we shall best be able to combat the bad ones. By adopting such a course you will not have yielded to your enemy, but will have gone, in all humility, to form new alliances: you will then resist an evil habit with the strength which you have gained in carrying out a good one. You will find, too, that when you set your heart upon the things that are worthy of it, the small selfish ends, which used to be so dear to it, will appear almost

disgusting: you will wonder that they could have had such hold upon you.

In the same way, if you extend and deepen your sympathies, the prejudices which have hitherto clung obstinately to you will fall away: your former uncharitableness will seem absolutely distasteful: you will have brought home to it feelings and opinions with which it cannot live.

Man, a creature of twofold nature, body and soul, should have both parts of that nature engaged in any matter in which he is concerned: spirit and form must both enter into it. It is idol-worship to substitute the form for the spirit: but it is a vain philosophy which seeks to dispense with the form. All this applies to self-discipline.

See how most persons love to connect some outward circumstance with their good resolutions: they resolve on commencing the new year with a surrender of this bad habit: they will alter their conduct as soon as they are at such a place. The mind thus shows its feebleness; but we must not conclude that the support it naturally seeks is useless. At the same time that we are to turn our chief attention to the attainment of right principles, we

cannot safely neglect any assistance which may strengthen us in contending against bad habits: far is it from the spirit of true humility to look down upon such assistance. Who would not be glad to have the ring of Eastern story, which should remind the wearer by its change of colour of his want of shame? Still these auxiliaries partake of a mechanical nature: we must not expect more from them than they can give: they may serve as aids to memory; they may form landmarks, as it were, of our progress; but they cannot, of themselves, maintain that progress.

It is in a similar spirit that we should treat what may be called prudential considerations. We may listen to the suggestions of prudence, and find them an aid to self-discipline; but we should never rest upon them. While we do not fail to make the due use of them, we must never forget that they do not go to the root of the matter. Prudence may enable a man to conquer the world, but not to rule his own heart: it may change one evil passion for another; but it is not a thing of potency enough to make a man change his nature.

Prayer is a constant source of invigora-

tion to self-discipline: not the thoughtless praying, which is a thing of custom; but that which is sincere, intense, watchful. Let a man ask himself whether he really would have the thing he prays for: let him think, while he is praying for a spirit of forgiveness, whether even at that moment he is disposed to give up the luxury of anger. If not, what a horrible mockery it is! To think that a man can find nothing better to do, in the presence of his Creator, than telling off so many words: alone with his God, and repeating his task like a child: longing to get rid of it, and indifferent to its meaning!

## ON OUR JUDGMENTS OF OTHER MEN.

IN forming these lightly, we wrong ourselves, and those whom we judge. In scattering such things abroad, we endow our unjust thoughts with a life which we cannot take away, and become false witnesses to pervert the judgments of the world in general. Who does not feel that to describe with fidelity the least portion of the entangled nature that is within him would be no easy matter? And yet the same man who feels this, and who, perhaps, would be ashamed of talking at hazard about the properties of a flower, of a weed, of some figure in geometry, will put forth his guesses about the character of his brother-man, as if he had the fullest authority for all that he was saying.

But perhaps we are not wont to make such rash remarks ourselves: we are only pleased to receive them with the most obliging credence from the lips of any person we may chance to meet with. Such credulity is any-

thing but blameless. We cannot think too seriously of the danger of taking upon trust these off-hand sayings, and of the positive guilt of uttering them as if they were our own, or had been assayed by our observation. How much we should be ashamed if we knew the slight grounds of some of those uncharitable judgments to which we lend the influence of our name by repeating them! And even if we repeat such things only as we have good reason to believe in, we should still be in no hurry to put them forward, especially if they are sentences of condemnation. There is a maxim of this kind which Thomas à Kempis, in his chapter 'de prudentiâ in agendis,' has given with all the force of expression that it merits. 'Ad hanc etiam pertinet, non quibuslibet hominum verbis credere; *nec audita vel credita, mox ad aliorum aures effundere.*'

There are certain things quite upon the surface of a man's character: there are certain obvious facts in any man's conduct: and there are persons who, being very much before the world, offer plenty of materials for judging about them. Such circumstances as these may fairly induce you to place credence in a general opinion, which, however, you

have no means of verifying in any way for yourself: but in no case should you suffer yourself to be carried away at once by the current sayings about men's characters and conduct. If you do, you are helping to form a mob. Consider what these sayings are: how seldom they embody the character discussed; or go far to exhaust the question, if it is one of conduct. It is well if they describe a part with faithfulness, or give indications from which a shrewd and impartial thinker may deduce some true conclusions. Again, these sayings may be true in themselves, but the prominence given to them may lead to very false impressions. Besides, how many of them must be formed upon the opinion of a few persons, and those, perhaps, forward thinkers.

You feel that you yourself would be liable to make mistakes of all kinds if you had to form an independent judgment in the matter: do not too readily suppose that the general opinions you hear are free from such mistakes merely because they are made, or appear to you to be made, by a great many people.

If we come to analyse the various opinions

we hear of men's character and conduct, there must be many which are formed wrongly, though sincerely, either from imperfect information, or erroneous reasoning. There will be others which are the simple result of the prejudices and passions of the persons judging, of their humours, and sometimes even of their ingenuity. There will be others grounded on total misrepresentations which arise from imperfect hearing, or from some entire mistake, or from a report being made by a person who understood so little of the matter that it was not possible for him to convey, with anything like accuracy, what he heard about it. Then there are the careless things which are said in general conversation, but which often have as much apparent weight as if they had been well considered. Sometimes these various causes are combined; and the result is, that an opinion of some man's character and conduct gets abroad which is formed after a wrong method, by prejudiced persons, upon a false statement of facts, respecting a matter which they cannot possibly understand; and this is then left to be inflated by Folly, and blown about by Idleness.

There is an excellent passage in Wollas-

ton's *Religion of Nature*, upon this subject, where he says, 'the good or bad repute of men depends in a great measure upon mean people, who carry their stories from family to family, and propagate them very fast: like little insects, which lay apace, and the less the faster. There are few, very few, who have the opportunity and the will and *the ability to represent things truly*. Beside the matters of fact themselves, there are many circumstances which, before sentence is passed, ought to be known and weighed, and yet scarce ever can be known, but to the person himself who is concerned. He may have other views, and another sense of things, than his judges have: and what he understands, what he feels, what he intends, may be a secret confined to his own breast. Or perhaps the censurer, notwithstanding this kind of men talk as if they were infallible, may be mistaken himself in his opinion, and judge that to be wrong which in truth is right.'

Few people have imagination enough to enter into the delusions of others, or indeed to look at the actions of any other person with any prejudices but their own. Perhaps, however, it would be nearer the truth to say

that few people are in the habit of employing their imagination in the service of charity. Most persons require its magic aid to gild their castles in the air; to conduct them along those fancied triumphal processions in which they themselves play so conspicuous a part; to conquer enemies for them without battles; and to make them virtuous without effort. This is what they want their imagination for: they cannot spare it for any little errand of charity. And sometimes when men do think charitably, they are afraid to speak out, for fear of being considered stupid, or credulous.

We have been considering the danger of adopting current sayings about men's character and conduct: but suppose we consider, in detail, the difficulty of forming an original opinion on these matters; especially if we have not a personal knowledge of the men of whom we speak. In the first place, we seldom know with sufficient exactness the facts upon which we judge: and a little thing may make a great difference when we come to investigate motives. But the report of a transaction sometimes represents the real facts no better than the laboured varia-

tion does the simple air; which, amidst so many shakes and flourishes, might not be recognized even by the person who composed it. Then again, how can we ensure that we rightly interpret those actions which we exactly know? Perhaps one of the first motives that we look for is self-interest, when we want to explain an action: but we have scarcely ever such a knowledge of the nature and fortunes of another, as to be able to decide what is his interest, much less what it may appear to him to be: besides, a man's fancies, his envy, his wilfulness, every day interfere with, and override his interests. He will know this himself, and will often try to conceal it by inventing motives of self-interest to account for his doing what he has a mind to do.

It is well to be thoroughly impressed with a sense of the difficulty of judging about others; still judge we must, and sometimes very hastily: the purposes of life require it. We have, however, more and better materials, sometimes, than we are aware of: we must not imagine that they are always deep-seated and recondite: they often lie upon the surface. Indeed, the primary character

of a man is especially discernible in trifles; for then he acts, as it were, almost unconsciously. It is upon the method of observing and testing these things, that a just knowledge of individual men in great measure depends. You may learn more of a person even by a little converse with him, than by a faithful outline of his history. The most important of his actions may be anything but the most significant of the man; for they are likely to be the results of many things besides his nature. To understand that, I doubt whether you might not learn more from a good portrait of him, than from two or three of the most prominent actions of his life. Indeed, if men did not express much of their nature in their manners, appearance, and general bearing, we should be at a sad loss to make up our minds how to deal with each other.

In judging of others, it is important to distinguish those parts of the character and intellect which are easily discernible from those which require much observation. In the intellect, we soon perceive whether a man has wit, acuteness, or logical power. It is not easy to discover whether he has judgment. And it requires some study of the man to

ascertain whether he has practical wisdom; which, indeed, is a result of high moral, as well as intellectual, qualities.

In the moral nature, we soon detect selfishness, egotism, and exaggeration. Carelessness about truth is soon found out; you see it in a thousand little things. On the other hand, it is very difficult to come to a right conclusion about a man's temper, until you have seen a great deal of him. Of his tastes, some will lie on the surface, others not; for there is a certain reserve about most people in speaking of the things they like best. Again, it is always a hard matter to understand any man's feelings. Nations differ in their modes of expressing feelings, and how much more individual men!

There are certain cases in which we are peculiarly liable to err in our judgments of others. Thus, I think, we are all disposed to dislike in a manner disproportionate to their demerits, those who offend us by pretension of any kind. We are apt to fancy that they despise us; whereas, all the while, perhaps, they are only courting our admiration. There are people who wear the worst part of their characters outwards: they offend our vanity; they rouse our fears; and under

these influences we omit to consider how often a scornful man is tender-hearted, and an assuming man, one who longs to be popular and to please.

Then there are characters of such a different kind from our own, that we are without the means of measuring and appreciating them. A man who has no humour, how difficult for him to understand one who has!

But of all the errors in judging of others, some of the worst are made in judging of those who are nearest to us. They think that we have entirely made up our minds about them, and are apt to show us that sort of behaviour only which they know we expect. Perhaps, too, they fear us, or they are convinced that we do not and cannot sympathize with them. And so we move about in a mist, and talk of phantoms as if they were living men, and think that we understand those who never interchange any discourse with us, but the talk of the market-place; or if they do, it is only as players who are playing a part, set down in certain words, to be eked out with the stage gestures for each affection, who would deem themselves little else than mad if they were to say out to us any thing of their own.

## ON THE
## EXERCISE OF BENEVOLENCE.

WITH the most engaging objects of benevolence around them, men consume the largest part of their existence in the acquisition of money, or of knowledge; or in sighing for the opportunities of advancement; or in doting over some unavailing sorrow. Or, as it often happens, they are outwardly engaged in slaving over the forms and follies of the world, while their minds are given up to dreams of vanity; or to long-drawn reveries, a mere indulgence of their fancy. And yet hard by them are groans, and horrors, and sufferings of all kinds, which seem to penetrate no deeper than their senses.

Let them think what boundless occupations there are before us all! Consider the masses of human beings in our manufacturing towns and crowded cities, left to their own devices—the destitute peasantry of our sister-land—the horrors of slavery wherever it exists—the general aspect of the common people—the pervading want of education—

the fallacies and falsehoods which are left, unchecked, to accomplish all the mischief that is in them—the many legal and executive reforms not likely to meet with much popular impulse, and requiring, on that account, the more diligence from those who have any insight into such matters. By employing himself upon any one of the above subjects, a man is likely to do some good. If he only ascertains what has been done, and what is doing, in any of these matters, he may be of great service. A man of real information becomes a centre of opinion, and therefore of action.

Many a man will say:—'This is all very true: there certainly is a great deal of good to be done. Indeed, one is perplexed what to choose as one's point of action; and still more how to begin upon it.' To which I would answer:—Is there no one service for the great family of man which has yet interested you? Is no work of benevolence brought near to you by the peculiar circumstances of your life? If there is; follow it at once. If not; still you must not wait for something apposite to occur. Take up any subject relating to the welfare of mankind, the first that comes to hand: read about it:

think about it: trace it in the world, and see if it will not come to your heart. How listlessly the eye glances over the map of a country upon which we have never set foot! On the other hand, with what satisfaction we contemplate the mere outline only of a land we have once travelled over! Think earnestly upon any subject, investigate it sincerely, and you are sure to love it. You will not complain again of not knowing whither to direct your attention. There have been enthusiasts about heraldry. Many have devoted themselves to chess. Is the welfare of living, thinking, suffering, eternal creatures, less interesting than 'argent' and 'azure,' or than the knight's move, and the progress of a pawn?

There are many persons, doubtless, who feel the wants and miseries of their fellow men tenderly if not deeply; but this feeling is not of the kind to induce them to exert themselves out of their own small circle. They have little faith in their individual exertions doing aught towards a remedy for any of the great disorders of the world. If an evil of magnitude forces itself upon their attention, they take shelter in a comfortable sort of belief that the course of events, or the

gradual enlightenment of mankind, or at any rate, something which is too large for them to have any concern in, will set it right. In short, they are content to remain spectators: or, at best, to wait until an occasion shall arrive when their benevolence may act at once, with as little preparation of means, as if it were something magical.

But opportunities of doing good, though abundant, and obvious enough, are not exactly fitted to our hands: we must be alert in preparing ourselves for them. Benevolence requires method and activity in its exercise. It is by no means the same sort of thing as the indolent good humour with which a well-fed man, reclining on a sunny bank, looks upon the working world around him.

As to the notion of waiting for the power to do good, it is one that we must never listen to. Surely the exercise of a man's benevolence is not to depend upon his worldly good fortune! Every man has to-day the power of laying some foundation for doing good; if not of doing it. And whoever does not exert himself until he has a large power of carrying out his good intentions, may be sure that he will not make the most

of the opportunity when it comes. It is not in the heat of action; nor when a man, from his position, is likely to be looked up to with some reverence; that he should have to begin his search for facts or principles. He should then come forth to apply results; not to work them out painfully, and perhaps precipitately, before the eyes of the world.

The worldly-wise may ask:—'Will not these benevolent pursuits prevent a man from following with sufficient force (what they call) his legitimate occupations?' I do not see why. Surely Providence has not made our livelihood such an all-absorbing affair, that it does not leave us room or time for our benevolence to work in. However, if a man will only give up that portion of his thinking time which he spends upon vain glory, upon imagining, for instance, what other people are thinking about him, he will have time and energy enough to pursue a very laborious system of benevolence.

I do not mean to contend that active benevolence may not hinder a man's advancement in the world: for advancement greatly depends upon a reputation for excellence in some one thing of which the world perceives

that it has present need: and an obvious attention to other things, though perhaps not incompatible with the excellence itself, may easily prevent a person from obtaining a reputation for it. But any deprivation of this kind would be readily endured if we only took the view of our social relations which Christianity opens to us. We should then see that benevolence is not a thing to be taken up by chance, and put by at once to make way for every employment which savours of self-interest. Benevolence is the largest part of our business, beginning with our home duties, and extending itself to the utmost verge of humanity. A vague feeling of kindness towards our fellow creatures is no state of mind to rest in. It is not enough for us to be able to say that nothing of human interest is alien to us, and that we give our acquiescence, or indeed our transient assistance, to any scheme of benevolence that may come in our way. No: in promoting the welfare of others we must toil; we must devote to it earnest thought, constant care, and zealous endeavour. What is more, we must do all this with patience; and be ready, in the same cause, to make an habitual sacrifice of our own tastes and wishes. Nothing short of

this is the visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked, which our creed requires of us.

Kindness to animals is no unworthy exercise of benevolence. We hold that the life of brutes perishes with their breath, and that they are never to be clothed again with consciousness. The inevitable shortness then of their existence should plead for them touchingly. The insects on the surface of the water, poor ephemeral things, who would needlessly abridge their dancing pleasure of to-day? Such feelings we should have towards the whole animate creation. To those animals, over which we are masters for however short a time, we have positive duties to perform. This seems too obvious to be insisted upon; but there are persons who act as though they thought they could buy the right of ill-treating any of God's creatures.

We should never in any way consent to the ill-treatment of animals, because the fear of ridicule, or some other fear, prevents our interfering. As to there being anything really trifling in any act of humanity, however slight, it is moral blindness to suppose so. The few moments in the course of each day

which a man absorbed in some worldly pursuit may carelessly expend in kind words or trifling charities to those around him, and kindness to an animal is one of these, are perhaps, in the sight of Heaven, the only time that he has lived to any purpose worthy of recording.

## DOMESTIC RULE.

TACITUS says of Agricola, that 'he governed his family, which many find to be a harder task than to govern a province.' And the worst of this difficulty is, that its existence is frequently unperceived, until it comes to be pressingly felt.

For, either a man thinks that he must needs understand those whom he sees daily, and also, perhaps, that it is no great matter whether he understand them or not, if he is resolved to do his duty by them: or he believes that in domestic rule there is much license, and that each occasion is to be dealt with by some law made at the time, or after: or he imagines that any domestic matter which he may leave to-day omitted or ill-done can be repaired at his leisure, when the concerns of the outer world are not so pressing as they are at present.

But each day brings its own duties, and carries them along with it; and they are as waves broken on the shore, many like them coming after but none ever the same. And

amongst all his duties, as there are none in which a man acts more by himself and can do more harm with less outcry from the world, so there are none requiring more forethought and watchfulness than those which arise from his domestic relations. Nor can there be a reasonable hope of his fulfilling those duties while he is ignorant of the feelings, however familiar he may be with the countenances, of those around him.

The extent and power of domestic rule are very great: but this is often overlooked by the persons who possess it; and they are rather apt to underrate the influence of their own authority. They can hardly imagine how strongly it is felt by others, unless they see it expressed in something outward. The effects of this mistake are often increased by another, which comes into operation when men are dealing with their inferiors in rank and education: in which case, they are rather apt to fancy that the natural sense of propriety, which would put the right limit to familiar intercourse, belongs only to the well-educated or the well-born. And from either of these causes, or both united, they are led, perhaps, to add to their authority by a harsh-

ness not their own, rather than to impair it, as they fancy, by that degree of freedom which they must allow to those around them, if they would enter into their feelings and understand their dispositions. Perhaps there are some persons who think that they can manage very well without this familiar intercourse: and certainly there is but little occasion for knowing much about the nature of those whom you intend only to restrain. Coercion, however, is but a small part of government.

We should always be most anxious to avoid provoking the rebel spirit of the will in those who are entrusted to our guidance: we should not attempt to tie them up to their duties, like galley-slaves to their labour. We should be very careful that, in our anxiety to get the outward part of an action performed to our mind, we do not destroy that germ of spontaneousness which could alone give any significance to the action. God has allowed free will to man, for the choice of good or evil; and is it likely that it is left to us to make our fellow-creatures virtuous by word of command? We may insist upon a routine of proprieties being performed with soldier-

like precision; but there is no drilling of men's hearts.

It is a great thing to maintain the just limits of domestic authority, and to place it upon its right foundation. You cannot make reason conform to it. It may be fair to insist upon a certain thing being done, but not that others should agree with you in saying that it is the best thing that could have been done; for there cannot be a shorter way of making them hypocritical. Your submitting the matter at all to their judgments may be gratuitous; but if you do so, you must remember that the Courts of Reason recognize no difference of persons. Your wishes may fairly outweigh their arguments: but this of course is foreign to the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the thing itself, considered independently.

Domestic Rule is founded upon truth and love. If it has not both of these, it is nothing better than a despotism.

It requires the perpetual exercise of love in its most extended form. You have to learn the dispositions of those under you, and to teach them to understand yours. In order to do this, you must sympathize with

them, and convince them of your doing so; for upon your sympathy will often depend their truthfulness. Thus, you must persuade a child to place confidence in you, if you wish to form an open upright character. You cannot terrify it into habits of truth. On the contrary, are not its earliest falsehoods caused by fear, much oftener than from a wish to obtain any of its little ends by deceit? How often the complaint is heard from those in domestic authority, that they are not confided in! But they forget how hard it is for an inferior to confide in a superior, and that he will scarcely venture to do so without the hope of some sympathy on the part of the latter; and the more so, as half our confidences are about our follies, or what we deem such.

Every one who has paid the slightest attention to this subject knows that domestic rule is built upon justice, and therefore upon truth; but it may not have been observed what evils will arise from even a slight deviation into conventionality. For instance, there is a common expression about 'overlooking trifles.' But what many persons should say, when they use this expression, is, —That they affect not to observe something,

when there is no reason why they should not openly recognize it. Thus they contrive to make matter of offence out of things which really have no harm in them. Or the expression means that they do not care to take notice of something which they really believe to be wrong; and as it is not of much present annoyance to them, they persuade themselves that it is not of much harm to those who practise it. In either case, it is their duty to look boldly at the matter. The greater quantity of truth and distinctness you can throw into your proceedings, the better. Connivance creates uncertainty, and gives an example of slyness; and very often you will find that you connive at some practice, merely because you have not made up your mind whether it is right or wrong, and you wish to spare yourself the trouble of thinking. All this is falsehood.

Whatever you allow in the way of pleasure or of liberty, to those under your control, you should do it heartily: you should recognize it entirely, encourage it, and enter into it. If, on the contrary, you do not care for their pleasures, or sympathize with their happiness, how can you expect to obtain their confidence? And when you tell them that you consult

their welfare, they look upon it as some abstract idea of your own. They will doubt whether you can know what is best for them, if they have good reason for thinking that you are likely to leave their particular views of happiness entirely out of the account.

We come next to consider some of the various means which may be made use of in Domestic Rule.

Of course it is obvious that his own example must be the chief means in any man's power, by which he can illustrate and enforce those duties which he seeks to impress upon his household.

Next to this, praise and blame are among the strongest means which he possesses; and they should not depend upon his humour. He should not throw a bit of praise at his dependents by way of making up for a previous display of anger, not warranted by the occasion.

Ridicule is in general to be avoided; not that it is inefficient, perhaps, for the present purpose; but because it tends to make a poor and world-fearing character. It is too strong a remedy: and can seldom be applied with

such just precision as to neutralize the evil aimed at, without destroying, at the same time, something that is good.

Still less should it ever appear that ridicule is directed against that which is good in itself, or which may be the beginning of goodness. There is perhaps more gentleness required in dealing with the infant virtues, than even with the vices, of those under our guidance. We should be very kind to any attempt at amendment. An idle sneer, or a look of incredulity, has been the death of many a good resolve. We should also be very cautious in reminding those who now would fain be wiser, of their rash sayings of evil, of their early and uncharitable judgments of others; otherwise we run a great risk of hardening them in evil. This is especially to be guarded against with the young; for never having felt the mutability of all human things, nor having lived long enough to discover that his former certainties are among the strangest things which a man looks back upon in the vista of the past: not perceiving that time is told by that pendulum, man, which goes backwards and forwards in its progress; nor dreaming that the way to some opinions may lie through their opposites; they are mightily

ashamed of inconsistency, and may be made to look upon reparation as a crime.

The following are some general maxims which may be of service to any one in domestic authority.

The first is to make as few crimes as he can: and not to lay down those rules of practice, which, from a careful observation of their consequences, he has ascertained to be salutary, as if they were so many innate truths which all persons alike must at once, and fully, comprehend.

Let him not attempt to regulate other people's pleasures by his own tastes.

In commanding, it will not always be superfluous for him to reflect whether the thing commanded is possible.

In punishing, he should not consult his anger; nor in remitting punishment, his ease.

Let him consider whether any part of what he is inclined to call disobedience, may have resulted from an insufficient expression of his own wishes.

He should be inclined to trust largely.

## ADVICE.

ADVICE is sure of a hearing when it coincides with our previous conclusions, and therefore comes in the shape of praise, or of encouragement. It is not unwelcome when we derive it for ourselves, by applying the moral of some other person's life to our own, though the points of resemblance which bring it home may be far from flattering, and the advice itself far from palatable. We can even endure its being addressed to us by another, when it is interwoven with regret at some error, not of ours, but of his; and when we see that he throws in a little advice to us, by way of introducing, with more grace, a full recital of his own misfortunes.

But in general it is with advice as with taxation; we can endure very little of either, if they come to us in the direct way. They must not thrust themselves upon us. We do not understand their knocking at our doors;

besides, they always choose such inconvenient times, and are for ever talking of arrears.

There is a wide difference between the advice which is thrust upon you, and that which you have to seek for; the general carelessness of the one, and the caution of the other, are to be taken into account. In sifting the latter, you must take care to separate the decorous part of it. I mean all that which the adviser puts in, because he thinks the world would expect it from a person of his character and station—all that which was to sound well to a third party, of whom, perhaps, the adviser stands somewhat in awe. You cannot expect him to neglect his own safety. The oracles will Philippize, as long as Philip is the master: but still they have an inner meaning for Athenian ears.

It is a disingenuous thing to ask for *advice*, when you mean *assistance;* and it will be a just punishment if you get that which you pretended to want. There is a still greater insincerity in affecting to care about another's advice, when you lay the circumstances before him, only for the chance of his sanctioning a course which you had previously resolved on. This practice is noticed by Rochefoucault,

who has also laid bare the falseness of those givers of advice who have hardly heard to the end of your story, before they have begun to think how they can advise upon it to their own interest, or their own renown.

It is a maxim of prudence that when you advise a man to do something which is for your own interest as well as for his, you should put your own motive for advising him, full in view, with all the weight that belongs to it. If you conceal the interest which you have in the matter, and he should afterwards discover it, he will be resolutely deaf even to that part of the argument which fairly does concern himself. If the lame man had endeavoured to persuade his blind friend that it was pure charity which induced him to lend the use of his eyes, you may be certain that he never would have been carried home, though it was the other's interest to carry him.

To get extended views, you should consult with persons who differ from you in disposition, circumstances, and modes of thought. At the same time, the most practicable advice may often be obtained from those who are of

a similar nature to yourself, or who understand you so thoroughly that they are sure to make their advice personal. This advice will contain sympathy; for as it has been said, a man always sympathizes to a certain extent with what he understands. It will not, perhaps, be the soundest advice that can be given in the abstract, but it may be that which you can best profit by; for you may be able to act up to it with some consistency. This applies more particularly when the advice is wanted for some matter which is not of a temporary nature, and where a course of action will have to be adopted. It is observed in *The Statesman* with much truth, 'Nothing can be for a man's interest in the long run which is not founded on his character.'

For similar reasons, when you have to give advice, you should never forget whom you are addressing, and what is practicable for him. You should not look about for the wisest thing which can be said, but for that which your friend has the heart to undertake, and the ability to accomplish. You must sometimes feel with him, before you can possibly think for him. There is more need of keeping this in mind, the greater you know the difference to be between your friend's

nature and your own. Your advice should not degenerate into comparisons between what would have been your conduct, and what was your friend's. You should be able to take the matter up at the point at which it is brought to you. It is very well to go back, and to show him what might, or what ought to have been done, if it throws any light upon what is to be done; or if you have any other good purpose in such conversation. But remember that comment, however judicious, is not advice; and that advice should always tend to something practicable.

The advice which we have been just speaking of, is of that kind which relates to points of conduct. If you want to change a man's principles, you may have to take him out of himself, as it were; to show him fully the intense difference between your own views and his, and to trace up that difference to its source. Your object is not to make him do the best with what he has, but to induce him to throw something away altogether.

There are occasions on which a man feels that he has so fully made up his mind that hardly anything could move him; and at

the same time, he knows that he shall meet with much blame from those whose good opinion is of value to him, if he acts according to that mind. Let him not think to break his fall by asking their advice beforehand. As it is, they will be severe upon him for not having consulted them; but they will be outrageous, if after having consulted them, he then acts in direct opposition to their counsel. Besides, they will not be so inclined to parade the fact of their not having been consulted, as they would, of their having given judicious advice which was unhappily neglected. I am not speaking of those instances in which a man is bound to consult others, but of such as constantly occur, where his consulting them is a thing which may be expected, but is not due.

In seeking for a friend to advise you, look for uprightness in him, rather than for ingenuity. It frequently happens that all you want is moral strength. You can discern consequences well enough, but cannot make up your mind to bear them. Let your Mentor also be a person of nice conscience, for such a one is less likely to fall into that error to which we are all so liable, of advising our

friends to act with less forbearance, and with less generosity, than we should be inclined to show ourselves, if the case were our own. 'If I were you' is a phrase often on our lips; but we take good care not to disturb our identity, nor to quit the disengaged position of a bystander. We recommend the course we might pursue if we were acting for you in your absence, but such as you never ought to undertake in your own behalf.

Besides being careful for your own sake about the persons whom you go to for advice, you should be careful also for theirs. It is an act of selfishness unnecessarily to consult those who are likely to feel a peculiar difficulty or delicacy in being your advisers, and who, perhaps, had better not be informed at all about the matter.

## SECRECY.

FOR once that secrecy is formally imposed upon you, it is implied a hundred times by the concurrent circumstances. All that your friend says to you, as to his friend, is entrusted to you only. Much of what a man tells you in the hour of affliction, in sudden anger, or in any outpouring of his heart, should be sacred. In his craving for sympathy, he has spoken to you as to his own soul.

To repeat what you have heard in social intercourse is sometimes a sad treachery; and when it is not treacherous, it is often foolish. For you commonly relate but a part of what has happened, and even if you are able to relate that part with fairness, it is still as likely to be misconstrued as a word of many meanings, in a foreign tongue, without the context.

There are few conversations which do not imply some degree of mutual confidence, however slight. And in addition to that which

is said in confidence, there is generally something which is peculiar, though not confidential; which is addressed to the present company alone, though not confided to their secrecy. It is meant for them, or for persons like them, and they are expected to understand it rightly. So that when a man has no scruple in repeating all that he hears to anybody that he meets, he pays but a poor compliment to himself; for he seems to take it for granted that what was said in his presence, would have been said, in the same words, at any time, aloud, and in the market-place. In short, that he is the average man of mankind: which I doubt much whether any man would like to consider himself.

On the other hand, there is an habitual and unmeaning reserve in some men, which makes secrets without any occasion; and it is the least to say of such things that they are needless. Sometimes it proceeds from an innate shyness or timidity of disposition; sometimes from a temper naturally suspicious; or it may be the result of having been frequently betrayed or oppressed. From whatever cause it comes, it is a failing. As cunning is some men's strength, so this sort of reserve is some men's prudence. The

man who does not know when, or how much, or to whom to confide, will do well in maintaining a Pythagorean silence. It is his best course. I would not have him change it on any account; I only wish him not to mistake it for wisdom.

That happy union of frankness and reserve which is to be desired, comes not by studying rules, either for candour or for caution. It results chiefly from an uprightness of purpose enlightened by a profound and delicate care for the feelings of others. This will go very far in teaching us what to confide, and what to conceal, in our own affairs; what to repeat, and what to suppress, in those of other people. The stone in which nothing is seen, and the polished metal which reflects all things, are both alike hard and insensible.

When a matter is made public, to proclaim that it had ever been confided to your secrecy may be no trifling breach of confidence: and it is the only one which is then left for you to commit.

With respect to the kind of people to be trusted, it may be observed that grave proud

men are very safe confidants: and that those persons, who have ever had to conduct any business in which secrecy was essential, are likely to acquire a habit of reserve for all occasions.

On the other hand, it is a question whether a secret will escape sooner by means of a vain man, or a simpleton. There are some people who play with a secret, until at last it is suggested by their manner to some shrewd person who knows a little of the circumstances connected with it. There are others whom it is unsafe to trust: not that they are vain, and so wear the secret as an ornament; not that they are foolish, and so let it drop by accident; not that they are treacherous, and sell it for their own advantage. But they are simple-minded people, with whom the world has gone smoothly, who would not themselves make any mischief of the secret which they disclose, and therefore do not see what harm can come of telling it.

Before you make any confidence, you should consider whether the thing you wish to confide is of weight enough to be a secret. Your small secrets require the greatest care. Most persons suppose that they have kept them

sufficiently when they have been silent about them for a certain time; and this is hardly to be wondered at, if there is nothing in their nature to remind a person that they were told to him as secrets.

There is sometimes a good reason for using concealment even with your dearest friends. It is that you may be less liable to be reminded of your anxieties when you have resolved to put them aside. Few persons have tact enough to perceive when to be silent, and when to offer you counsel or condolence.

You should be careful not to entrust another unnecessarily with a secret which it may be a hard matter for him to keep, and which may expose him to somebody's displeasure, when it is hereafter discovered that he was the object of your confidence. Your desire for aid, or for sympathy, is not to be indulged by dragging other people into your misfortunes.

There is as much responsibility in imparting your own secrets, as in keeping those of your neighbour.

# THE SECOND PART.

'THE wisdom touching negotiation or business hath not been hitherto collected into writing, to the great derogation of learning, and the professors of learning. For from this root springeth chiefly that note or opinion, which by us is expressed in adage to this effect, 'that there is no great concurrence between learning and wisdom.' For of the three wisdoms which we have set down to pertain to civil life, for wisdom of behaviour, it is by learned men for the most part despised, as an inferior to virtue, and an enemy to meditation; for wisdom of government, they acquit themselves well when they are called to it, but that happeneth to few; but for the wisdom of business, wherein man's life is most conversant, there be no books of it, except some few scattered advertisements, that have no proportion to the magnitude of this subject. For if books were written of this, as the other, I doubt not but learned men with mean experience would far excel men of long experience without learning, and outshoot them in their own bow.'—BACON'S *Advancement of Learning*.

# ON THE EDUCATION OF A MAN OF BUSINESS.

THE essential qualities for a man of business are of a moral nature: these are to be cultivated first. He must learn betimes to love truth. That same love of truth will be found a potent charm to bear him safely through the world's entanglements—I mean safely in the most worldly sense. Besides, the love of truth not only makes a man act with more simplicity, and therefore with less chance of error; but it conduces to the highest intellectual development. The following passage in *The Statesman* gives the reason. 'The correspondencies of wisdom and goodness are manifold; and that they will accompany each other is to be inferred, not only because men's wisdom makes them good, but also because their goodness makes them wise. Questions of right and wrong are a perpetual exercise of the faculties of those who are solicitous as to the right and wrong of what they do and see; and a deep interest of the heart in these questions carries with it a deeper cultivation

of the understanding than can be easily effected by any other excitement to intellectual activity.'

What has just been said of the love of truth applies also to other moral qualities. Thus, charity enlightens the understanding quite as much as it purifies the heart. And indeed knowledge is not more girt about with power than goodness is with wisdom.

The next thing in the training of one who is to become a man of business will be for him to form principles; for without these, when thrown on the sea of action, he will be without rudder and compass. They are the best results of study. Whether it is history, or political economy, or ethics, that he is studying, these principles are to be the reward of his labour. A principle resembles a law in the physical world; though it can seldom have the same certainty, as the facts, which it has to explain and embrace, do not admit of being weighed or numbered with the same exactness as material things. The principles which our student adopts at first may be unsound, may be insufficient, but he must not neglect to form some; and must only nourish a love of truth that will not allow

him to hold to any, the moment that he finds them to be erroneous.

Much depends upon the temperament of a man of business. It should be hopeful, that it may bear him up against the faintheartedness, the folly, the falsehood, and the numberless discouragements which even a prosperous man will have to endure. It should also be calm; for else he may be driven wild by any great pressure of business, and lose his time, and his head, in rushing from one unfinished thing, to begin something else. Now this wished-for conjunction of the calm and the hopeful is very rare. It is, however, in every man's power to study well his own temperament, and to provide against the defects in it.

A habit of thinking for himself is one which may be acquired by the solitary student. But the habit of deciding for himself, so indispensable to a man of business, is not to be gained by study. Decision is a thing that cannot be fully exercised until it is actually wanted. You cannot play at deciding. You must have realities to deal with.

It is true that the formation of principles,

which has been spoken of before, requires decision; but it is of that kind which depends upon deliberate judgment: whereas, the decision which is wanted in the world's business must ever be within call, and does not judge so much as it foresees and chooses. This kind of decision is to be found in those who have been thrown early on their own resources, or who have been brought up in great freedom.

It would be difficult to lay down any course of study, not technical, that would be peculiarly fitted to form a man of business. He should be brought up in the habit of reasoning closely: and to ensure this, there is hardly anything better for him than the study of geometry.

In any course of study to be laid down for him, something like universality should be aimed at, which not only makes the mind agile, but gives variety of information. Such a system will make him acquainted with many modes of thought, with various classes of facts, and will enable him to understand men better.

There will be a time in his youth which may, perhaps, be well spent in those studies

which are of a metaphysical nature. In the investigation of some of the great questions of philosophy, a breadth and a tone may be given to a man's mode of thinking, which will afterwards be of signal use to him in the business of every-day life.

We cannot enter here into a description of the technical studies for a man of business; but I may point out that there are works which soften the transition from the schools to the world, and which are particularly needed in a system of education, like our own, consisting of studies for the most part remote from real life. These works are such as tend to give the student that interest in the common things about him, which he has scarcely ever been called upon to feel. They show how imagination and philosophy can be woven into practical wisdom. Such are the writings of Bacon. His lucid order, his grasp of the subject, the comprehensiveness of his views, his knowledge of mankind, the greatest perhaps that has ever been distinctly given out by any uninspired man, the practical nature of his purposes, and his respect for anything of human interest, render Bacon's works unrivalled in their fitness to form the

best men for the conduct of the highest affairs.

It is not, however, so much the thing studied, as the manner of studying it. Our student is not intended to become a learned man, but a man of business; not a 'full man,' but a 'ready man.' He must be taught to arrange and express what he knows. For this purpose let him employ himself in making digests, arranging and classifying materials, writing narratives, and in deciding upon conflicting evidence. All these exercises require method. He must expect that his early attempts will be clumsy; he begins, perhaps, by dividing his subject in any way that occurs to him, with no other view than that of treating separate portions of it separately; he does not perceive, at first, what things are of one kind, and what of another, and what should be the logical order of their following. But from such rude beginnings, method is developed; and there is hardly any degree of toil for which he would not be compensated by such a result. He will have a sure reward in the clearness of his own views, and in the facility of explaining them to others. People bring their attention to the man who gives them most profit for it;

and this will be one who is a master of method.

Our student should begin soon to cultivate a fluency in writing—I do not mean a flow of words, but a habit of expressing his thoughts with accuracy, with brevity, and with readiness; which can only be acquired by practice early in life. You find persons who, from neglect in this part of their education, can express themselves briefly and accurately, but only after much care and labour. And again, you meet with others who cannot express themselves accurately, although they have method in their thoughts, and can write with readiness; but they have not been accustomed to look to the precise meaning of words: and such people are apt to fall into the common error of indulging in a great many words, as if it were from a sort of hope that some of them might be to the purpose.

In the style of a man of business nothing is to be aimed at but plainness and precision. For instance, a close repetition of the same word for the same thing need not be avoided. The aversion to such repetitions may be carried too far in all kinds of writing. In literature, however, you are seldom brought

to account for misleading people; but in business you may soon be called upon to pay the penalty for having shunned the word which would exactly have expressed your meaning.

I cannot conclude this essay better than by endeavouring to describe what sort of person a consummate man of business should be.

He should be able to fix his attention on details, and be ready to give every kind of argument a hearing. This will not encumber him, for he must have been practised beforehand in the exercise of his intellect, and be strong in principles. One man collects materials together, and there they remain, a shapeless heap; another, possessed of method, can arrange what he has collected; but such a man as I would describe, by the aid of principles, goes farther, and builds with his materials.

He should be courageous. The courage, however, required in civil affairs, is that which belongs rather to the able commander than the mere soldier. But any kind of courage is serviceable.

Besides a stout heart, he should have a patient temperament, and a vigorous but dis-

ciplined imagination; and then he will plan boldly, and with large extent of view, execute calmly, and not be stretching out his hand for things not yet within his grasp. He will let opportunities grow before his eyes until they are ripe to be seized. He will think steadily over possible failure, in order to provide a remedy or a retreat. There will be the strength of repose about him.

He must have a deep sense of responsibility. He must believe in the power and vitality of truth, and in all he does or says, should be anxious to express as much truth as possible.

His feeling of responsibility and love of truth will almost inevitably endow him with diligence, accuracy, and discreetness,—those common-place requisites for a good man of business, without which all the rest may never come to be 'translated into action.'

## ON THE TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS.

THIS subject may be divided into two parts. 1. Dealing with others about business. 2. Dealing with the business itself.

### 1. *Dealing with others about Business.*

THE first part of the general subject embraces the choice and management of agents, the transaction of business by means of interviews, the choice of colleagues and the use of councils. Each of these topics will be treated separately. There remain, however, certain general rules with respect to our dealings with others which may naturally find a place here.

In your converse with the world avoid anything like a juggling dexterity. The proper use of dexterity is to prevent your being circumvented by the cunning of others. It should not be aggressive.

Concessions and compromises form a large and a very important part of our dealings

with others. Concessions must generally be looked upon as distinct defeats; and you must expect no gratitude for them. I am far from saying that it may not be wise to make concessions, but this will be done more wisely when you understand the nature of them.

In making compromises, do not think to gain much by concealing your views and wishes. You are as likely to suffer from its not being known how to please or satisfy you, as from any attempt to overreach you, grounded on a knowledge of your wishes.

Delay is in some instances to be adopted advisedly. It sometimes brings a person to reason when nothing else could; when his mind is so occupied with one idea, that he completely over-estimates its relative importance. He can hardly be brought to look at the subject calmly by any force of reasoning. For this disease time is the only doctor.

A good man of business is very watchful, over both himself and others, to prevent things from being carried against his sense of right in moments of lassitude. After a matter has been much discussed, whether to the purpose

or not, there comes a time when all parties are anxious that it should be settled; and there is then some danger of the handiest way of getting rid of the matter being taken for the best.

It is often worth while to bestow much pains in gaining over foolish people to your way of thinking: and you should do it soon. Your reasons will always have some weight with the wise. But if at first you omit to put your arguments before the foolish, they will form their prejudices; and a fool is often very consistent, and very fond of repetition. He will be repeating his folly in season, and out of season, until at last it has a hearing; and it is hard if it does not sometimes chime in with external circumstances.

A man of business should take care to consult occasionally with persons of a nature quite different from his own. To very few are given all the qualities requisite to form a good man of business. Thus a man may have the sternness and the fixedness of purpose so necessary in the conduct of affairs, yet these qualities prevent him, perhaps, from entering into the characters of those about him. He

is likely to want tact. He will be unprepared for the extent of versatility and vacillation in other men. But these defects and oversights might be remedied by consulting with persons whom he knows to be possessed of the qualities supplementary to his own. Men of much depth of mind can bear a great deal of counsel; for it does not easily deface their own character, nor render their purposes indistinct.

*2.. Dealing with the Business itself.*

THE first thing to be considered in this division of the subject is the collection and arrangement of your materials. Do not fail to begin with the earliest history of the matter under consideration. Be careful not to give way to any particular theory, while you are merely collecting materials, lest it should influence you in the choice of them. You must work for yourself; for what you reject may be as important for you to have seen and thought about, as what you adopt: besides, it gives you a command of the subject, and a comparative fearlessness of surprise, which you will never have, if you rely on other people for your materials. In some cases, however, you may save time by not labouring much, beforehand, at parts of the subject

which are nearly sure to be worked out in discussion.

When you have collected and arranged your information, there comes the task of deciding upon it. To make this less difficult, you must use method, and practise economy in thinking. You must not weary yourself by considering the same thing in the same way; just oscillating over it, as it were; seldom making much progress, and not marking the little that you have made. You must not lose your attention in reveries about the subject; but must bring yourself to the point by such questions as these, What has been done? What is the state of the case at present? What can be done next? What ought to be done? Express in writing the answers to your questions. Use the pen—there is no magic in it, but it prevents the mind from staggering about. It forces you to methodize your thoughts. It enables you to survey the matter with a less tired eye. Whereas in thinking vaguely, you not only lose time, but you acquire a familiarity with the husk of the subject, which is absolutely injurious. Your apprehension becomes dull; you establish associations of ideas which occur again and

again to distract your attention; and you become more tired, than if you had really been employed in mastering the subject.

When you have arrived at your decision, you have to consider how you shall convey it. In doing this, be sure that you very rarely, if ever, say anything which is not immediately relevant to the subject. Beware of indulging in maxims, in abstract propositions, or in anything of that kind. Let your subject fill the whole of what you say. Human affairs are so wide, subtle, and complicated, that the most sagacious man had better content himself with pronouncing upon those points alone upon which his decision is called for.

It will often be a nice question whether or not to state the motives for your decisions. Much will depend upon the nature of the subject, upon the party whom you have to address, and upon your power of speaking out the whole truth. When you can give all your motives, it will in most cases be just to others, and eventually good for yourself, to do so. If you can only state some of them, then you must consider whether they are likely to mislead, or whether they tend to the full truth. And for your own sake there is this to be considered in giving only a part of

your reasons: that those which you give are generally taken to be the whole, or at any rate, the best that you have. And, hereafter, you may find yourself precluded from using an argument which turns out to be a very sound one, which had great weight with you, but which you were at the time unwilling, or did not think it necessary, to put forward.

When you have to communicate the motives for an unfavourable decision, you will naturally study how to convey them so as to give least pain, and to ensure least discussion. These are not unworthy objects; but they are immediate ones, and therefore likely to have their full weight with you. Beware that your anxiety to attain them does not carry you into an implied falsehood; for, to say the least of it, evil is latent in that. Each day's converse with the world ought to confirm us in the maxim that a bold but not unkind sincerity should be the groundwork of all our dealings.

It will often be necessary to make a general statement respecting the history of some business. It should be lucid, yet not overburdened with details. It must have method not merely running through it, but visible upon

it—it must have method in its form. You must build it up, beginning at the beginning, giving each part its due weight, and not hurrying over those steps which happen to be peculiarly familiar to yourself. You must thoroughly enter into the ignorance of others, and so avoid forestalling your conclusions. The best teachers are those who can seem to forget what they know full well; who work out results, which have become axioms in their minds, with all the interest of a beginner, and with footsteps no longer than his.

It is a good practice to draw up, and put on record, an abstract of the reasons upon which you have come to a decision on any complicated subject; so that if it is referred to, there is but little labour in making yourself master of it again. Of course this practice will be more or less necessary, according as your decision has been conveyed with a reserved or with a full statement of the reasons upon which it was grounded.

Of all the correspondence you receive, a concise record should be kept; which should also contain a note of what was done upon any letter, and of where it was sent to, or

put away. Documents relating to the same subject should be carefully brought together. You should endeavour to establish such a system of arranging your papers, as may ensure their being readily referred to, and yet not require too much time and attention to be carried into daily practice. Fac-similes should be kept of all the letters which you send out.

These seem little things: and so they are, unless you neglect them.

## ON THE CHOICE AND MANAGEMENT OF AGENTS.

THE choice of agents is a difficult matter, but any labour that you may bestow upon it, is likely to be well repaid: for you have to choose persons for whose faults you are to be punished; to whom you are to be the whipping-boy.

In the choice of an agent, it is not sufficient to ascertain what a man knows, or to make a catalogue of his qualities; but you have to find out how he will perform a particular service. You may be right in concluding that such an office requires certain qualities, and you may discern that such a man possesses most of them; and in the absence of any means of making a closer trial, you may have done the best that you could do. But some deficiency, or some untoward combination of these qualities, may unfit him for the office. Hence the value of any opportunity, however slight, of observing his conduct in matters similar to those for which you want him.

Our previous knowledge of men will sometimes mislead us entirely, even when we apply it to circumstances but little different, as we think, from those in which we have actually observed their behaviour. For instance, you might naturally imagine that a man who shows an irritable temper in his conversation, is likely to show a similar temper throughout the conduct of his business. But experience does not confirm this; for you will often find that men who are intemperate in speech are cautious in writing.

The best agents are, in general, to be found amongst those persons who have a strong sense of responsibility. Under this feeling a man will be likely to grudge no pains; he will pay attention to minute things; and what is of much importance, he will prefer being considered ever so stupid, rather than pretend to understand his orders before he does so.

You should behave to your subordinate agents in such a manner, that they should not be afraid to be frank with you. They should be able to comment freely upon your directions, and may thus become your best

counsellors. For those who are entrusted with the execution of any work, are likely to see things which have been overlooked by the person who designed it, however sagacious he may be.

You must not interfere unnecessarily with your agents, as it gives them the habit of leaning too much upon you. Sir Walter Scott says of Canning, 'I fear he works himself too hard, under the great error of trying to do too much with his own hand, and to see everything with his own eyes. Whereas the greatest general and the first statesman must, in many cases, be content to use the eyes and fingers of others, and hold themselves contented with the exercise of the greatest care in the choice of implements.' Most men of vigorous minds and nice perceptions will be apt to interfere too much; but it should always be one of the chief objects of a person in authority to train up those around him to do without him. He should try to give them some self-reliance. It should be his aim to create a standard as to the way in which things are to be done—not to do them all himself. That standard is likely to be maintained for some time, in case

of his absence, illness, or death; and it will be applied daily to many things that must be done without a careful inspection on his part, even when he is in full vigour.

With respect to those agents whom you employ to represent you, your inclination should be to treat them with hearty confidence. In justice to them, as well as for your own sake, the limits which you lay down for their guidance, should be precise. Within those limits you should allow them a large discretionary power. You must be careful not to blame your agent for departing from your orders, when in fact the discrepancy which you notice is nothing more than the usual difference in the ways in which different men set about the same object, even when they employ similar means for its accomplishment. For a difference of this kind you should have been prepared. But if you are in haste to blame your representative, your captiousness may throw a great burden upon him unnecessarily. It is not the success of the undertaking only that he will thenceforward be intent upon: he will be anxious that each step should be done exactly after your

fancy. And this may embarrass him, render him indecisive, and lead to his failing altogether.

The surest way to make agents do their work is to show them that their efforts are appreciated with nicety. For this purpose, you should not only be very careful in your promotions and rewards; but in your daily dealings with them, you should beware of making slight or hap-hazard criticisms on any of their proceedings. Your praise should not only be right in the substance, but put upon the right foundation: it should point to their most strenuous and most judicious exertion. I do not mean that it should always be given at the time of those exertions being made, but it should show that they had not passed by unnoticed.

## ON THE TREATMENT OF SUITORS.

THE maxim, 'Pars beneficii est, quod petitur si bene neges,' is misinterpreted by many people. They construe 'bene' *kindly*, which is right: but they are inclined to fancy that this kindness consists in courtesy, rather than in explicitness and truth.

You should be very loth to encourage expectations in a suitor, which you have not then the power of fulfilling, or of putting in a course of fulfilment;—for Hope, an architect above rules, can build, in reverse, a pyramid upon a point. From a very little origin there often arises a wildness of expectation which quite astounds you. Like the Fisherman in the *Arabian Nights*, when you see 'a genie twice as high as the greatest of giants,' you may well wonder how he could have come out of so small a vessel; but in your case, there will be no chance of persuading the monster to ensconce himself again, for the purpose of convincing you that such a feat is not impossible.

In addition also to the natural delusions of hope, there is sometimes the artifice of pretending to take your words for more than they are well known to mean.

There is a deafness peculiar to suitors; they should therefore be answered as much as possible in writing. The answers should be expressed in simple terms; and all phrases should be avoided which are not likely to convey a clear idea to the man who hears them for the first time. There are many persons who really do not understand forms of writing which may have become common to you. When they find that courteous expressions mean nothing, they think that a wilful deception has been practised upon them. And in general, you should consider that people will naturally put the largest construction upon every ambiguous expression, and every term of courtesy which can be made to express anything at all in their favour.

It will often be necessary to see applicants; and in this case you must bear in mind that you have not only the delusions of hope and the misinterpretation of language to contend against, but also the imperfection of men's memories. If possible, therefore, do not let

the interview be the termination of the matter: let it lead to something in writing, so that you may have an opportunity of recording what you wished to express. Avoid a promising manner; as people will be apt to find words for it. Do not resort to evasive answers for the purpose only of bringing the interview to a close; nor shrink from giving a distinct denial, merely because the person to whom you ought to give it is before you, and you would have to witness any pain which it might occasion. Let not that balance of justice which Corruption could not alter one hair's breadth, be altogether disturbed by Sensibility.

To determine in what cases the refusal of a suit should be accompanied by reasons, is a matter of considerable difficulty. It must depend very much on what portion of the truth you are able to bring forward. This was mentioned before as a general principle, in the transaction of business, and it may be well to abide by it in answering applications. You will naturally endeavour to give somewhat of a detailed explanation when you are desirous of showing respect to the person whom you are addressing; but if the explanation is not a sound or a complete one, it

would be better to see whether the respect could not be shown in some other way.

In many cases, and especially when the suit is a mere project of effrontery, it will perhaps be prudent to refuse, without entering at all upon the grounds of your refusal. In an explanation addressed to the applicant, you will be apt to omit the special reasons for your refusal, as they are likely to be such as would mortify his self-love; and so you lay yourself open to an accusation of unfairness, when he finds, perhaps, that you have selected some other person, who came as fully within the scope of your general objections, as he did himself. Therefore, where you are not required, and do not like, to give special reasons, it may often be the best course simply to refuse, or to couch your refusal in impregnable generalities.

Remember that in giving any reason at all for refusing, you lay some foundation for a future request.

Those who have constantly to deal with suitors are in danger of giving way too much to disgust at the intrusion, importunity, and egotism, which they meet with. As an antidote to this, they should remember that the

suit which is a matter of business to them, and which, perhaps, from its hopelessness, they look upon with little interest, seems to the suitor himself a thing of absorbing importance. And they should expect a man in distress to be as unreasonable as a sick person, and as much occupied by his own disorder.

## INTERVIEWS.

THERE is much that cannot be done without interviews. It would often require great labour, not only on your part, but also on the part of others whom you cannot command, to effect by means of writing what may easily be accomplished in a single interview. The pen may be a surer, but the tongue is a nicer instrument. In talking, most men sooner or later show what is uppermost in their minds; and this gives a peculiar interest to verbal communications. Besides, there are looks, and tones, and gestures, which form a significant language of their own. In short, interviews may be made very useful; and are, in general, somewhat hazardous things: but many people look upon them rather as the pastime of business, than as a part of it requiring great discretion.

Interviews are perhaps of most value when they bring together several conflicting interests, or opinions, each of which has thus an opportunity of ascertaining the amount and

variety of opposition which it must expect, and so is worn into moderation. It would take a great deal of writing to effect this.

Interviews are to be resorted to when you wish to prevent the other party from pledging himself upon a matter which requires much explanation; where you see what will probably be his answer to your first proposition, and know that you have a good rejoinder, which you would wish him to hear before he commits himself by writing upon the subject. In cases of this kind, however, there is the similar danger of a man's talking himself into obstinacy before he has heard all that you have to say.

Interviews are very serviceable in those matters where you would at once be able to come to a decision, if you did but know the real inclination of the other parties concerned: and, in general, you should take care occasionally to see those with whom you are dealing, if the thing in question is likely to be much influenced by their individual peculiarities, and you require a knowledge of the men. Now this is the case with the greatest part of human affairs.

You frequently want verbal communication in order to encourage the timid, to settle the

undecided, and to bring on some definite stage in the proceedings.

The above are instances in which interviews are to be sought for on their own account; but they are sometimes necessary, merely because people will not be satisfied without them. There are persons who can hardly believe that their arguments have been attended to, until they have had verbal evidence of the fact. They think that they could easily answer all your objections, and that they should certainly succeed in persuading you, if they had an opportunity of discussing the matter orally: and it may be of importance to remove this delusion by an interview.

On the other hand interviews are to be avoided, when you have reasons which determine your mind, but which you cannot give to the other party. If you do accede to an interview, you are almost certain to be tempted into giving some reasons, and these not being the strong ones, will very likely admit of a fair answer; and so, after much shuffling, you will be obliged to resort to an appearance of mere wilfulness at last.

You should also be averse to transacting business verbally, with very eager, sanguine

persons, unless you feel that you have sufficient force and readiness for it. There are people who do not understand any dissent or opposition on your part, unless it is made very manifest. They are fully prepossessed by their own views, and they go on talking as if you agreed with them. Perhaps you feel a delicacy in interrupting them, and undeceiving them at once. The time for doing so passes by; and ever afterwards they quote you as an authority for all their folly. Or it ends by your going away pledged to a course of conduct which is anything but what you approve.

But perhaps there are no interviews less to be sought after than those in which you have to appear in connexion with one or two other parties who have exactly the same interest in the matter as your own, and must be supposed to speak your sentiments, but with whom you have had little or no previous communication; or whose judgment you find that you cannot rely upon. In such a case you are continually in danger of being compromised by the indiscretion of any one of your associates. For you do not like to disown one of your own side before the adverse party; or you are afraid of taking all the

odium of opposition on yourself. You may perhaps be quite certain that your indiscreet ally would be as anxious as yourself to recall his words if he could perceive their consequences: but these are things which you cannot explain to him in that company.

The men who profit least by interviews are often those who are most inclined to resort to them. They are irresolute persons, who wish to avoid pledging themselves to anything, and so they choose an interview as the safest course which occurs to them. Besides it looks like progress: and makes them, as they say, see their way. Such persons, however, are very soon entangled in their own words, or they are oppressed by the earnest opinions of the people they meet. For to conduct an interview in the manner which they intend, would require them to have at command that courage and decision, which they never attain, without a long and miserly weighing of consequences.

Indolent persons are very apt to resort to interviews; for it saves them the trouble of thinking steadily, and of expressing themselves with precision, which they are called upon to do, if they come to write about the

subject. Now they certainly may learn a great deal in a short time, and with very little trouble, by means of an interview: but if they have to take up the position of an antagonist, of a judge, or indeed any but that of a learner, then it is very unsafe to indulge in an interview, without having prepared themselves for it.

To conduct an interview successfully, requires not only information and force of character, but also a certain intellectual readiness. People are so apt to think that there are but two ways in which a thing can terminate. They are ignorant of the number of combinations which even a few circumstances will admit of. And perhaps a proposal is made which they are totally unprepared for, and which they cannot deal with, from being unable to apprehend with sufficient quickness its main drift and consequences.

There are cases where the persons meeting are upon no terms of equality respecting the interview; where one of them has a great deal to maintain, and the other nothing to lose. Such an instance occurs in the case of a minister receiving a deputation. He has the interests of the public to maintain, and

the intentions of the government to keep concealed. He has to show that he fully understands the arguments laid before him; and all the while to conceal his own bias, and to keep himself perfectly free from any pledge. Any member of the deputation may utter any thing that he pleases without much harm coming of it; but every word that the minister says is liable to be interpreted against him to the uttermost. There are similar occasions in private life, where a man has to act upon the defensive, and where the interview may be considered not as a battle, but as a siege. A man should then confine himself to few words. He should bring forward his strongest arguments only, and not state too many of them at a time; for he should keep a good force in reserve. Besides it will be much more difficult for the other party to mystify and pervert a few arguments than a set speech. And he will leave them no room for gaining a semblance of victory by answering the unimportant parts of his statement.

Again, whatever readiness and knowledge of the subject he may possess, he should have somebody by him on his side. For he is opposed to numbers, and must expect that amongst them there will always be some one

ready to meet his arguments, if not with argument, at any rate with the proper fallacies; or at least that there will be some one stupid enough to commence replying without an answer. He should therefore have a person who should be able to aid him in replying; and there will be a satisfaction in having somebody in the room who is not in a hostile position towards him. Besides he will want a witness: for he must not imagine that the number of his opponents is any safeguard against misrepresentation, but rather a cause, in most people, of less attention, and less feeling of responsibility. And lastly, the most precise man in the world, if he speaks much on any matter, may be glad to hear what was the impression upon another person's mind: in short, to see whether he conveyed exactly what he meant to convey.

The best precaution, however, which any man can take under these circumstances, is to state in writing, at the conclusion of the interview, the substance of what he apprehends to have been said, and of what he intends to do. This would require great readiness and the most earnest attention; but in the end, it would save very much trouble and misapprehension. A similar practice

might be adopted in most interviews of business, where the subject would warrant such a formality. It would not only be good in itself, but its influence would be felt throughout the interview; and people would come prepared, and would speak with precision, when there was an immediate prospect of their statements being recorded.

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## OF COUNCILS, COMMISSIONS,

### AND, IN GENERAL, OF BODIES OF MEN CALLED TOGETHER TO COUNSEL, OR TO DIRECT.

SUCH bodies are the fly-wheels and safety-valves of the machinery of business. They are sometimes looked upon as superfluities, but by their means the motion is equalised, and a great force is applied with little danger.

They are apt contrivances for obtaining an average of opinions, for ensuring freedom from corruption, and the reputation of that freedom. On ordinary occasions they are more courageous than most individuals. They can bear odium better. The world seldom looks to personal character as the predominating cause of any of their doings, though this is one of the first things which occurs to it when the public acts of any individual are in question. The very indistinctness which belongs to their corporate existence adds a certain weight to their decisions.

Councils are serviceable as affording some

means of judging how things are likely to be generally received. It is seldom that any one person, however capable he may be of framing, or of executing a good measure, can come to a satisfactory conclusion as to the various appearances which that measure will present, or can be made to present, to others. In some instances he may be so little under the influence of the common prejudices around him, as not to understand their force, and therefore not to perceive how a new thing will be received. Now if he has the opportunity of consulting several persons together, he will not only have the advantage of their common sense and joint information, but he will also have a chance of hearing what will be the common nonsense of ordinary men upon the subject, and of providing as far as possible against it.

On the other hand, these bodies are much tempted by the division of responsibility to sloth; and therefore to dealing with things superficially, and inaccurately. Another evil is the want of that continuity of purpose in their proceedings which is to be found in those of an individual.

As it tends directly to diminish many of the advantages before mentioned, it is, in

general, a wrong thing for a member of a Council or Commission to let the outer world know that his private opinion is adverse to any of the decisions of his colleagues; or indeed to indicate the part, whatever it may have been, that he has taken in the transactions of the general body.

The proper number of persons to constitute such bodies must vary according to the purpose for which they are called together. Such a number as would afford any temptation for oratorical display should in general be avoided. Another limit, which it may be prudent to adopt, is to have only so many members as to make it possible in most cases for each to take a part in the proceedings. By having a greater number, you will not ensure more scrutiny into the business. It will still be done by a few; but with a feeling of less responsibility than if they were left to themselves, and with the interruptions and inconvenience arising from the number of persons present. Besides, the greater the number, the more likelihood there is of parties being formed in the Council.

Whether the members are many or few, there should be formalities, strictly main-

tained. This is essential in the conduct of business. Otherwise there will be such a state of things as that described by Pepys in his account of a meeting of the privy council; which, like most of his descriptions, one feels to be true to the life. 'We to a Committee of the Council to discourse concerning pressing of men; but Lord! how they meet; never sit down: one comes, now another goes, then comes another; one complaining that nothing is done, another swearing that he hath been there these two hours and nobody come. At last my Lord Annesley says, 'I think we must be forced to get the King to come to every Committee; for I do not see that we do any thing at any time but when he is here.''

The great art of making use of councils, commissions, and such like bodies, is to know what kind of matter to put before them, and in what state to present it. 'There be three parts of business, the preparation; the debate, or examination; and the perfection; whereof, if you look for dispatch, let the middle only be the work of many, and the first and last the work of few.'* There is likely to be a great waste of time and labour when a thing

* Bacon's *Essay on Dispatch.*

is brought in all its first vagueness to be debated or examined by a number of persons. And there will be much in the 'preparation' and 'perfection' of a matter which will only become confused by being submitted to a full assembly. You might as well think of making love by a council or a board. It should therefore be the business of some one, either in the council, or subordinate to it, to bring the matter forward in a distinct and definite shape. Otherwise there will be a wilderness of things said before you arrive at any legitimate point of discussion. And hence Bacon adds, 'the proceeding upon somewhat conceived in writing doth for the most part facilitate dispatch: for though it should be wholly rejected, yet that negative is more pregnant of direction than an indefinite, as ashes are more generative than dust.'

In order to bring the responsibility of any act of the general body home to the individuals composing it, no method seems so good as that of requiring the signatures of a large proportion of the council or commission to the directions given in the matter. Even the most careless people have a sort of aversion to signing things which they have never

considered. This plan is better than requiring the signatures of the whole body. For it is less likely to degenerate into a mere formality: and besides, the other course would give any one crotchetty man too great a power of hinderance.

The responsibility, also, of those persons who settle the details of a matter, whether secretaries, or committees of the Council, should be clearly attested either by their signatures, or by a memorandum, showing what part of the business had been entrusted to them.

As to the kind of men to be especially chosen or rejected, it would be trifling to lay down any minute rules. You often require a diversity of natures, in order that the various modes of acting congenial to different minds and tempers should have an opportunity of being canvassed.

When a man's faults are those which come to the surface in social life, they must be noted as certain hinderances to his usefulness as a member of any of these bodies. A man may be proud or selfish, and yet a good councillor; he may be secretly ill-tempered, and yet a reasonable man in his converse with the world, capable of bearing opposition, and an

excellent coadjutor: but if he is vain, or fond of disputes, or dictatorial, you know that his efficiency in a Council must to a certain extent be counteracted.

Those men are the grace and strength of Councils who are of that healthful nature which is content to take defeat with good-humour, and of that practical turn of mind which makes them set heartily to work upon plans and propositions which have been originated in opposition to their judgment; who are not anxious to shift responsibility upon others; and who do not allude to their former objections with triumph, when those objections come to be borne out by the result. In acting with such persons you are at your ease. You counsel sincerely and boldly, and not with a timorous regard to your own part in the matter.

The men who have method, and, as it were, a judicial intellect, are most valuable councillors. Without some such in a Council, a great deal of cleverness goes for nothing: as there is nobody to see what has been stated and answered, to what their deliberations tend, and what progress has been made. Such persons can gather the sense of a mixed assembly, and suggest some line of action

which may honestly meet the different views of the various members. They will bring back the subject matter when it has all but floated away, while the others have been looking for sea-weed, or throwing stones at one another on the shore.

## PARTY-SPIRIT.

PARTY-SPIRIT gives a pretext for the exercise of such scorn and malice, as could not be tolerated, if they did not claim to have their origin in fervent wishes for the public welfare. It consumes in idle contests that energy which the state has need of. By the perpetual interchange of hard names it tends to make a people suspicious and uncharitable; or it inclines them to think lightly of the kind of offences which they hear so often charged against their most eminent public men; or it 'gives them a habit of using epithets and affecting sensations of moral indignation which bear no proportion to the thing itself, or to their own real feelings about the thing; of taking the names of Truth and Virtue in vain.'

Under the influence of party-spirit, a nation sometimes acts towards its dependencies, and in its foreign relations, not with the whole force of the country, but with a portion of it only, bearing some reference to the excess of strength in the ruling party.

Party-spirit makes people abjure independent thinking. It can leave nothing alone. It must uplift a hand in every man's quarrel, as a knight-errant of old, but with small sense of chivalry. It forces its odious friendship or its unprovoked hostility where neither is fitting. Even the wisest require to be constantly on their guard against it; or its insidious prejudices, like dirt and insects on the glasses of a telescope, will blur the view, and make them see strange monsters where there are none.

Party-spirit incites people to attack with rashness, and to defend without sincerity. Violent partisans are apt to treat a political opponent in such a manner, when they argue with him, as to make the question quite personal, as if he had been present, as it were, and a chief agent in all the crimes which they attribute to his party. Nor does the accused hesitate to take the matter upon himself, and, in fancied self-defence, to justify things which otherwise he would not hesitate, for one moment, to condemn.

These evils must not be allowed to take shelter under the unfounded supposition that party dealings are different from any thing

else in the world, and that they are to be governed by much looser laws than those which regulate any other human affairs. It is a very dangerous thing to acknowledge two sorts of truth, two kinds of charity.

Is there no harm in never looking further than the worst motive that can possibly be imagined for the actions of our political adversaries? Are we to consider the opposite party as so many Samaritans; and is there nothing that we have ever heard or read, which should induce us to abate our Jewish antipathy to these brethren of ours, who do not worship at our temple? This is an illustration from which political bigots cannot escape. Even their own pretensions of being always in the right will only bring the instance more home to them. The Jews were right about the matter in dispute between them and the Samaritans. 'Salvation is with the Jews.' But this is never held out to us as any justification of their behaviour.

To hear some men talk, one would suppose that political distinctions were natural distinctions; and that they depended upon a man's personal qualities. These people seem to think that all the good are ranged in a

row on one side; and all the bad on the other. Now the utmost that can reasonably be alleged is, that there exists in most men a predisposition to one or other of the two great parties which are to be found in every free country: but this cannot be depended upon as the cause which determines men in general to attach themselves to a party.

As it is, some range themselves on one side, and some on the other, just as they used to do in their school games, and with about as much reflection. A large number of persons, in all ranks, hold hereditary opinions. There are thousands who make their convictions on all political subjects subservient to their feelings as members of a class, and to what they believe to be the interests of that class. Then there are those who think whatever the little mob in which they live pleases to think: and this is the most comfortable way of thinking. Direct self-interest decides some men. The merest accidents determine others. For instance, how much of a man's opinions through life will depend upon any strong-minded or earnest person that he may have lived with at a time when he was uninformed himself and malleable. Remember too, that it requires but a slight

bias to send a man into a party; for let him agree with it only in a few points, and he will be set down as belonging to it. Then, perhaps, he is called upon to act in some way or other politically, and a very little determines a man whose thoughts upon the subject altogether have been few and vague. Thus a political character is impressed upon him without his having had much to do in the matter; but, afterwards, many things will probably occur to deepen that impression, and to make him a decided partisan.

A true analysis of the composition of parties would afford a good lesson of political tolerance. We should learn from it what a mixed thing a party is; that there is no single law that will explain its cohesion; and still less is there any good ground for insisting that the distinctions of party have their origin in moral worth or turpitude.

It is of importance that we should train ourselves to make the fitting allowance for the political prejudices of others.

Pascal asks, 'Whence comes it to pass that we have so much patience with those who are maimed in body, and so little with those who are defective in mind?' And he says, 'It is because the cripple acknowledges that

we have the use of our legs; whereas the fool obstinately maintains that we are the persons who halt in understanding. Without this difference in the case, neither object would move our resentment, but both our compassion.' We might try to overlook this difference, and find it an aid to charity to consider that men's prejudices are the same kind of things as their personal defects. Whether a man is labouring under some degree of physical deafness; or under some strong prejudice, which being ever by his side, is always sure of the first hearing, and produces a sort of numbness to anything else: it comes nearly to the same thing as regards the weight which he is likely to attach to any of our arguments, when adverse to his prejudice. In both cases the cause is decided without our being fully heard.

But at the same time that we have recourse to such views as the above, to moderate our impatience of other people's prejudices, we should keep a vigilant watch on our own. We often forget that we are partisans ourselves, and that we are contending with partisans. We first give ourselves credit for a judicial impartiality in all that concerns public affairs; and then call upon our opponents

actually to be as impartial as we assert ourselves to be. But few of us, I suspect, have any right to take this high ground. Our passions master us: and we know them to be our enemies. Our prejudices imprison us: and like madmen, we take our jailors for a guard of honour.

I do not mean to suggest that truth and right are always to be found in middle courses; or that there is anything particularly philosophic in concluding that 'both parties are in the wrong,' and 'that there is a great deal to be said on both sides of the question,' —phrases which may belong to indolence as well as to charity and candour. Let a man have a hearty strong opinion, and strive by all fair means to bring it into action—if it is, in truth, an opinion, and not a thing inhaled like some infectious disorder.

Many persons persuade themselves that the life and well-being of a state are something like their own fleeting health and brief prosperity. And hence they see portentous things in every subject of political dispute. Such fancies add much to the intolerance of party-spirit. But the state will bear much

killing. It has outlived many generations of political prophets—and it may survive the present ones.

Divisions in a state are a necessary consequence of freedom; and the practical question is not to dispense with party, but to make the most good of it. The contest must exist: but it may have something of generosity in it. And how is this to be? Not by the better kind of men abstaining from any attention to politics, or shunning party connexions altogether. Staying away from a danger which in many instances it is their duty to face, would be but a poor way of keeping themselves safe. It would be a doubtful policy to encourage political indifference as a cure for the evils of party-spirit, even if it were a certain cure; but we cannot take this for granted, especially when we observe that the vices of party are not always to be seen most in those who have the most earnest political feelings. Indeed, the attachment to a party may be, and often is, an affection of the most generous kind: and it must, I think, be allowed, that even with men who do not discern the true end of party, nor its limits, party-spirit is often a rude kind of patriotism.

The question, then, is how to regulate party-spirit. Like all other affections, its tendency is to overspread the whole character. One who has nothing in his soul to resist it, or much that assimilates with its worst influences, is carried away by it to evil. But a good man will show the earnestness of his attachment to his party by his endeavour to elevate its character; and in the utmost heat of party contests, he will try to maintain a love of truth, and a regard for the charities of life.

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